

WELCOME 26th June 2022 – 3 Pentecost '22 C

Romans 5:1-11 & 18-19

Welcome! It's great to be together again today! Can't tell you how excited I am to be moving through the book of Romans as a family of disciples...**Bible Study Qs** are provided to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word & work in your life, then you can share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups** which are back Friday @ 1p.m.

As we move into this week... Pastor Louie Giglio says it just right: "Follow the trail... What trail? "...the trail of your time, your affection, your energy, your money, & your allegiance. At the end of that trail you'll find a throne; & whatever, whoever, is on that throne is what's of highest value to you. On that throne is what you worship...The trail never lies."

As Paul writes to the church in Rome he reminds us the throne at the end of the trail is most often occupied by **self**...In a world of sinners we desperately try to rule not only our own lives but our experience of the world. We want everyone to acknowledge our throne. You hear it echoed every day: "**You** be you." "Be true to yourself." "Follow your own heart, determine your own reality to become your true self." That's the motto of the expressive individualism that characterizes this generation. But if 'you being you' is what makes you happy & fulfilled...why do we see greater anger, frustration, anxiety & discord in our culture? Why is there an increasing fragility in people's sense of self when looking inwards is supposed to empower you to live fully?

As long as the trail points to a throne like that...anxiety, frustration, anger & discord & death is all you'll get...But "since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us." Jesus retakes that throne for the Father by his life & in return...we are given **righteousness** (a restored right relationship w/ God) **peace** (an end to the striving & struggling to make much of me) confident joy-filled hope of **life** with the Father forever: "For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son.."

Peace isn't a feeling, it's a friendship & it's peace w/ God that leads to the peace of God.

We'll explore & experience that together...

Let's pray & then sing along with some video leadership this morning accompanied by our capable worship team.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

All: (from Psalm 116:1-2)

*I love the Lord, for he heard my voice;
he heard my cry for mercy.
Because he turned his ear to me,
I will call on him as long as I live. Amen.*

God of hope, we come to you amid a world starved for hope.
God of peace we come to you in a world filled with strife & struggle.
We cry out for your mercy trusting you always hear & long to draw us to you.
Open our hearts to your word. Open our spirits to your wonder, & fill us by the power of the Holy Spirit with your grace & truth. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen

Rest My Soul then Romans 5

FAITH CHAT:

1. What's the worst part about being "at odds with" or "out of sorts with" someone you care about? What's the most important part of restoring a damaged relationship?
2. If someone were to look closely at your life...where would they see spiritual peace in you?

3 PENTECOST '22 C – OPERATION GOSPEL: GOSPEL RIGHTEOUSNESS

Back in the days of the dinosaurs when paper maps ruled the driving world & GPS was science-fiction...the US equivalent of the NRMA the American Automobile Assoc did a study of drivers like me...w/ a dodgy sense of direction. Simple test. They gave 'em directions to somewhere they'd never been, provided a mud map & said "See you there." Sure enough...a bunch got lost...or temporarily off course.

What they discovered was fascinating. The majority of those who got lost actually, for a critical period of time, were right on course until they talked themselves into "lost." They got to a place along the way & said "I feel lost" & turned around or picked a different route...usually w/in a reasonable distance from the next landmark ...a sign that would have assured them they were ok IF they hadn't talked themselves into giving up. They quit too soon. They gave into despair too quickly. They threw in the towel to their own sense of "lostness" & got lost.

They "felt" lost even if they weren't & acted on that "feeling" to their own detriment. That happens in other parts of life too. How many people tell themselves they are bad at math, not good at sport or public speakers & always seem to live down to their lowest expectations? (Acts 2 Pentecost reading) Talk ourselves into "lost."

I've lost count of the times someone has said to me...I felt God abandoned me...wasn't listening to my prayers...was disappointed in me...wanted nothing to do w/ me...wanted more from me than I could give...had nothing to offer me that I couldn't do for myself...& then cut themselves off from God's people...walk away from worship...shut down the relationship God seeks...They pursue a trail following their own heart their own feelings their own sense of what's right/good/true & end up with a throne they alone sit on.

Paul writes to the church in Rome knowing they're as vulnerable as any of us...as at risk as you or me or anyone we know to talk ourselves feel ourselves think ourselves into lost...into danger...disaster...alienation from the Father. And he points to the rock solid truth...the bigger stronger more-powerful-than-our-feelings reality of Christ crucified, risen & ruling FOR US...look how he says it...

Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight (declared righteous – justified) by faith, we have **peace** with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of **undeserved privilege** (grace) where we now stand, & we **confidently & joyfully look forward to** (boast in the hope of – exult in the hope of) sharing God's glory.

"Therefore" – what's it there for? Let's track Paul's thought...letter so we're together...

Paul points to our world that in its very being declares God's glory majesty power & goodness all designed to allow our lives to flourish in relationship w/ the Father. Human sin corrupts that intention/desire & warps the fabric of the universe & alienates us severs that good relationship w/ God. Alienation from God (sin) is not merely a matter of breaking rules, moral taboos...it is a sign of cosmic warfare & rebellion. We betray our role as image-bearers/dominion-sharers to become god-for-self. Humanity joins cause w/ hostile powers arrayed against God & God's purposes for the world. *For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.*

But in Christ, the hostility is ended...God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. God presented Jesus as the (ransom) sacrifice for sin. People are made right w/ God when they believe Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. "Therefore" since God through Jesus crucified/risen/ruling has eliminated every obstacle to our fellowship friendship relationship w/ the Father...the war is over. God declares us righteous. We are no longer at odds w/ Him. We no longer stand b/4 Him broken by sin. He now sees us as righteous...everything broken & twisted by sin is made right – restored... Col 1:22: "*he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, & you are holy & blameless as you stand before him w/o a single fault.*" Present tense...right now...that's how the Father sees you/me.

All the barriers b/t God & us are gone. Shame gone. Guilt gone. Fear gone. Blame gone. Separation gone. Death gone. Measure up to religious perfection gone. Determine my own identity gone. Sit on my own throne gone. Establish my own worth & value gone. Defend my security gone. Safeguard the future gone. Every aspect of being god-for-self gone.

This state of peace w/ God also creates 2 follow-on blessings directly tied to our being united w/ Christ by faith...baptized into his death/rez: **1st undeserved privilege (grace)** Which means what? Heb 4:16 says it's access to the very presence of God in **every** circumstance of our lives: *So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, & find grace to help us when we need it most.* Paul describes it in Eph 1:3: *All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.* God withholds nothing necessary for our lives because our relationship friendship is restored & reconciled through the death/rez of Jesus. If we don't have it it is because we don't need it right now...It's ok when God says "No...Not now."

2nd peace w/ God simultaneously plants deep w/in a sure hope of sharing in God's glory now & in the future. That's a hope we can boast about. "Boast" **DOES NOT** mean brag proudly. The word Paul uses (*kauchaomai*) is one of the strongest words for "joy" in the Gk language. It's not just mild joy. It is triumphant, confident, bursting,

overflowing rejoicing. **Extreme joy.** We rejoice in our new position as God's friends because it assures us God by the work of the Holy Spirit will create in each of us the full expression all God is & all He intends us to be. He will restore fully his image in us distorted/damaged by sin. *I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will carry it on to completion on the day when Christ Jesus returns.* – Php 1:6 We rejoice in confident joyful hope of seeing God keep all his promises for us in us. Joy doesn't stop there

We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems & trials, for we know they help us develop endurance. Endurance develops strength of character, & character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. We rejoice not because of but in our times of suffering & struggle because in the moment of greatest pressure, persecution, or distress we discover God is in the fire alongside us. How does that happen? Paul chooses 3 words: endurance character & hope...they remind us that when the heat's on is when we discover our genuine security...what we truly cling to for hope & support. Under duress is the real you. The anxiety, frustration, anger & discord in our world tells you that lots of folks are hanging onto stuff they think they can't afford to lose because they have nothing else to hope for.

As people who live in peace w/ God – enjoy a reconciled restored friendship w/ the Father when we are under the pump we learn to focus on what really matters...to continue to pursue only that which endures...all false fading fleeting desires get winnowed out. Suffering struggle turmoil difficult seasons in life help us because they lead us back to our true source of hope...security...refuge. Tragically...I think this is where lots of folks talk themselves into "lost." Things go badly. There's a struggle that shows no sign of letting up. A circumstance they've prayed about doesn't change. There's a want or a need to which God says "No...not the way you want it," & they give up...break away...go off on a different path.

But hear the assurance: *This hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.* How do we know God loves us...has declared peace b/t us – made us right w/ him? 1st Holy Spirit is here assuring me of his love...Should I lose sight of that...There's this: *When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time & died for us sinners ... God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*

Paul writes to the church in Rome knowing they're as vulnerable as any of us...as at risk as you or me or anyone we know to talk ourselves feel ourselves think ourselves into lost...into danger...disaster...alienation from the Father. And he points to the rock solid truth...the bigger stronger more-powerful-than-our-feelings reality of Christ crucified, risen & ruling **FOR US**...Hope is only as valuable or trustworthy as the object on which it rests. The object of hope is not our own suffering or our own

successes, but the suffering death & victorious resurrection of Christ on our behalf. Suffering produces a hope that rests on God's love made visible in Jesus Christ crucified/risen/ruling.

The anxiety, frustration, anger & discord in our world tells you that lots of folks are hanging onto stuff they think they can't afford to lose because they have nothing else to hope for. They're sitting on their throne hanging on for dear life w/ white knuckles & gritted teeth...But "*since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.*" Jesus retakes that throne for the Father by his life & in return...we are given righteousness (a restored right relationship w/ God) peace (an end to the striving & struggling to make much of me) confident joy-filled hope of life w/ the Father forever: "*For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son..*" Peace isn't a feeling; it's a friendship & it's peace w/ God that leads to the peace **of** God...the unshakable assurance... "*Though the mountains be shaken & the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,*" says the Lord, who has compassion on you. – Is 54:10

TAKE IT HOME:

Where will you live out that peace with & peace of God this week?

Please don't say "everywhere"...try to be specific with a person or a place

Let's close praying together

Heavenly Father, I am powerless. You take me into the power of your love. I am sinful & broken. In Christ you make me whole. Lead me deeper in trusting you for all things, and in trusting Christ to finish his new creation in me. By your Spirit give me opportunity and obedience in sharing the gospel with those I love who still live distant from you. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.